

Building Strong Foundations for Families in Challenging Times

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These are challenging times for families. Across our community, families are facing uncertainty — from worries about putting food on the table, to finding affordable, safe housing, to struggling with child care that allows parents to work.

Like many challenges before, we remain committed to moving forward with a sharp focus on what we can do to make a difference for families.

This year, DEPC lost considerable funding due to cuts to SNAP-Ed, and we face uncertainty about future state allocations. Still, our commitment to children and families remains unwavering. We continue to make the best use of the resources available and to strengthen the early education system our community deserves.

Recently, DEPC hosted an *Early Education and the Bottom Line* session for community leaders and advocates to discuss how to move early education forward in the Twin Counties. We are also planning community listening sessions to ensure local voices shape the future. If you have ideas or want to get involved, please reach out.

Stabilizing the Early Childhood Workforce

The early education field has been in crisis since before COVID-19. Teachers often struggle to support their own families, and providers face ongoing staffing shortages. In 2019, the statewide turnover rate for early childhood teachers was 21%. By 2023, it had soared to 38%. WAGE\$ provides salary supplements tied to education levels, improving both teacher retention and quality. The FY25 turnover rate among WAGE\$ participants was just 13% statewide — and only 8% here in Nash and Edgecombe counties which is a large part of local Smart Start funding. DEPC supports expanding the statewide Child Care WAGE\$® program to all 100 counties with dedicated funding to stabilize the teacher workforce, freeing up local Smart Start funding to help more families navigate the rapidly changing landscape.

Affordable and Accessible Child Care

High-quality child care is critical for working families, but it's often out of reach. In Edgecombe County, the average monthly cost for a four-star center is \$1,040; in Nash, \$940. Many parents miss work due to unstable child care arrangements — a cycle that affects families and employers alike.

Building Social Connections

Isolation is a growing concern for parents under stress. Through programs like Triple P, Playgroups, and Circle of Parents, DEPC helps caregivers build social networks and connect to resources that support strong, healthy families.

Providing Concrete Supports

Too many children live in poverty — 39% in Edgecombe and 21% in Nash, compared to the state average of 18%. Families need practical help: diapers, formula, car seats, cribs, and stable housing. Food insecurity affects 16% of Edgecombe residents and 14% in Nash.

How You Can Help

- **Donate:** Support DEPC’s work providing direct assistance to families. Visit our website to contribute.
- **Stay Engaged:** Join community conversations and share ideas or resources.
- **Reach Out to Elected Officials:** Let them know how funding decisions impact children and families. If you an employer, please help elected officials know how the child care crisis has impacted your ability to attract and retain local employees.
- **Look for the Positive:** Despite challenges, our community continues to shine. A recent DEPC book drive collected over 2,000 books for children, and this summer alone, 89,338 meals were served through our Summer Feeding/Summer Learning Program.

Together, we can build an even stronger community — one where every child has the foundation to thrive. Thank you for all that you do for our children and community.

Early Childhood & Family Well-Being Data — Twin Counties 2025

Metric	Definition / Notes	Edgecombe (2025)	Nash (2025)	NC (2025)
Childcare workers pay	Hourly mean & annual mean	\$13.03/hr (\$27,100/yr)	\$13.68/hr (\$28,454/yr)	\$14.20/hr (\$29,530/yr)
Children in poverty	% under 18 in poverty	39%	21%	18%
Social isolation	% reporting isolation as a major issue	47.4%	42.7%	29.9%
Children in poor or low-income homes	% of children in poor or low-income homes	58.9%	49%	41%
Food insecurity	% of population experiencing food insecurity	16%	14%	14%
Childcare cost	Four-Star Center Market Rate (monthly)	\$1,040	\$940	\$977